

April 28th

GOD ALMIGHTY SHOWS MERCY

“May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved.”

GENESIS 43:14

Compassion. It's a word that brings comfort. A word that brings healing. There's a word that is closely aligned with compassion: mercy. Compassion can drive acts of mercy. Without compassion, people are left to wallow in their hurt. However, with compassion rescue can be offered to people in need. It's mercy and compassion that we see in Genesis 43. What does God teach us here in Genesis 43?

We can see here that Jacob is brought to the end of himself. He's already lost one son decades ago and now he has lost another son. He has no confidence that Benjamin will return with the brothers if he sends them back to Egypt. Hear the emotion in Jacob's voice here: “You have bereaved me of my children: Joseph is no more, and Simeon is no more, and now you would take Benjamin. All this has come against me.” A few verses later he states, “My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. If harm should happen to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol.” These are desperate words spoken by a broken man. Remember, Benjamin was Rachel's son, but she didn't survive the birth. Benjamin is Jacob's last reminder of his beloved wife Rachel. Jacob's desperation at the end of Genesis 42 sets the stage for the hunger that the entire family was facing in Genesis 43. Chapter 43 describes how bad things had become: the famine was severe in the land. We know earlier from Pharaoh's dreams that the famine lasted seven years. This hunger crisis moves Jacob to action even at the expense of his youngest son Benjamin. You can hear again his desperation when he's questioning the brothers: “Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?”

As Jacob sends out his sons for another perilous journey, he calls on God's mercy. But what does he call God? He uses the name that God revealed to Jacob in Genesis 35: El Shaddai, which means God Almighty. God revealed His name to Jacob just after his sons had committed the murders at Shechem. God had delivered Jacob's family from retaliation. God shows that He protects the one that He has called. It's the same name that God reveals to Abraham in Genesis 17. Jacob knows there is the possibility of never seeing Benjamin again. One thing that he doesn't know is that when he says, “May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man” that he is talking about his lost son Joseph. How the tables have turned! Mercy begins the journey and compassion ends the journey here in this chapter. We see two words in English from 43:14 (mercy) and 43:30 (compassion). However, the two words are the same Hebrew word. As Joseph sees his brother, his compassion moves deeply in his heart moving him to mercy on his brothers. And God orchestrates all of it. He is the master painter that has saved His people. Without Joseph going to Egypt as a slave, chances are that the people perish in the wilderness because of hunger. But God. God caused all of it to happen to save this generation of the Israelites.

How do we respond to these events? Men, the same God who showed the brothers mercy and compassion shows us all the same mercy. We have sinned against a holy God. But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love that He has shown us, raised us up with Him! God gives you a Substitute! His name is Jesus. We deserve death and separation. Instead, we are given the riches of the kingdom. Just like the brothers. How will we respond to our King's gracious mercy?

Spend some time thanking God for His great mercy over you. Ask Him for help today to live joyfully because of His love for you.

For Further Reading: Genesis 43:1-34

